

Accessible Transportation in the San Francisco Bay Area

The Bay Area has a
range of public
transportation
options:

Bus,
Train,
Ferryboat and
Paratransit

**Which
service
is best
for
you?**



Public Transportation: for all of us

Over twenty agencies in the San Francisco Bay Area provide public transportation using buses, streetcars, trains, ferryboats and paratransit vehicles. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that transit agencies make their services accessible to people with disabilities. This brochure describes the accessibility of these transportation services, and, for those people whose disability prevents use of public transit, provides information on how to become eligible to use ADA paratransit.

What is the ADA?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is an important civil rights law passed in 1990 that has greatly increased the transportation options for people with disabilities. The law called for improvements to transportation services, including the availability of paratransit service. The ADA does not require a transit agency “to meet all the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities.” But it does ensure that people with disabilities receive “the same mass transportation service opportunities everyone else receives.”

Accessible Transportation Options in the Bay Area

For most people using public transportation, the most convenient and flexible way to travel is by bus or train. It costs less and requires less planning than paratransit. Here are some of the features you will find on most transportation systems in the Bay Area (contact your local operator to find out details about transit in your area):

Buses and trains equipped with wheelchair lifts or low floor ramps to allow easy access for people with disabilities.

Priority seating for those who need it.

Drivers trained to provide assistance in securing wheelchairs in designated spaces.

Bus drivers trained to allow passengers time to be seated, and to get on and off the vehicle.



Announcement of stops at major intersections, transfer points and, at the request of passengers, specific destinations.

BART and Muni Metro stations with elevators to the boarding platforms - once on the platform, it is easy to board the train.

Route and schedule information provided by transit agencies, including the best way to reach your destination. This information is available in accessible formats if needed.

If you are unfamiliar with using public transit, travel training may be available to teach you how to travel comfortably and safely on a bus or train.

Need more information about your transportation options?

For more information about how to ride the bus, train, or ferry, or if you'd like help planning a trip, **call 511 to connect with your transit agency.**

What is ADA Paratransit?

ADA paratransit service is a “safety net” for people who, due to their disability, are unable to ride regular buses and trains some or all of the time. ADA paratransit is a parallel service to fixed-route transportation services (buses and trains). This means paratransit services operate in the same area, on the same days and during the same hours as the public transit operates.

Paratransit service may be provided on small buses, vans, taxis, or in sedans. It is generally a shared ride service that must be reserved at least one day in advance. The service picks you up at your door or at the curb and takes you to your destination. The vehicle may make several stops on the way to your destination to pick up or drop off other passengers. The pick up time you are assigned may vary by up to one hour from the time you requested. Paratransit drivers do not enter

ADA paratransit is just one of the mobility options in the Bay Area. Find out which is the most appropriate for you.



people's homes or their destination locations. Riders who need extra assistance beyond what the driver provides may bring an assistant or "attendant" with them at no additional charge.

Before using paratransit, a person must be determined eligible because his or her disability prevents use of regular buses or trains some or all of the time.

What is the ADA paratransit eligibility program?

To use ADA paratransit, riders must first qualify for this parallel service. Disabled persons who are unable to use regular buses and

trains some or all of the time may apply for eligibility by calling the local transit agency in their area and asking for an application. In the Bay Area, most of the transit agencies use the same ADA paratransit application form and follow a common certification process. If you are found eligible by one transit operator, you will be able to use any ADA paratransit program throughout the Bay Area.

Who is eligible for ADA paratransit?

The Bay Area's regional ADA paratransit certification process is based on federal regulations that identify three categories for determining paratransit eligibility.

According to the law you may be eligible for paratransit if:

- Your disability prevents you from boarding, riding, or getting off a bus or train, without the help of someone else.
- The service you need is not accessible. (Since most transportation systems are accessible in the Bay Area, this category seldom applies).
- Your disability prevents you from getting to or from a bus or train stop.





Can I be eligible for paratransit if it is very difficult for me to use a bus or train?

Not necessarily. The test for eligibility is based purely on your inability to use regular buses or trains. Your ability to use public transit may be limited by a physical, cognitive, visual or psychiatric disability. Difficulty using public transportation, or being diagnosed as having a disability, are not automatic grounds for paratransit eligibility. Similarly, eligibility is not based on your age, your inability to speak English, or inconvenient bus service. The only test for eligibility is based on your inability to use the regular public transit services offered by Bay Area transit operators.

Can I take all my trips on paratransit?

The transit agency may find you to be **fully eligible**, **conditionally eligible**, **temporarily eligible**, or **ineligible** to use paratransit.

- **Fully eligible** riders may take paratransit trips at any time the service is available.
- **Conditionally eligible** riders may take paratransit for some trips, but may be required to take fixed route transit for other trips.
- **Temporarily eligible** riders are given eligibility for the period of time their disability is expected to prevent them from using regular public transportation.
- If you are **denied eligibility** this means that the agency has determined that you are able to take public transportation, and you may not use paratransit service. If you disagree with the agency's decision, you may appeal. Instructions on how to appeal are included on the application form.



All printed eligibility materials are available in Braille, audiotape cassette, large print and/or electronic format.

TTY numbers are available through each transit agency, and other assistance to deaf or hearing impaired persons will be provided upon request.

How do I apply for eligibility?

The regional eligibility process may vary slightly by operator, so you should call your local transit agency to find out more information. In general, the process includes the following steps:

- Call your transit agency to request the application form.
- Read and completely fill out the form, which requires authorization to contact your doctor or medical professional.
- Submit the information to your transit agency at the address provided.
- After reviewing your application, agency staff may:
 - contact you on the phone to discuss how your disability prevents you from using public transportation
 - ask you to send additional information
 - contact a health professional to get more information
 - invite you for an in-person evaluation of your ability to ride public transportation.

- An in-person evaluation could involve a discussion with a trained professional of the reasons why you cannot use public transportation. Or, you might be asked to try out a number of actions that would be needed when using a bus or train.

You may bring somebody with you to the evaluation and you may also bring additional documentation, but these are not required.

- Within 21 days after your completed application form has been received or you have completed the in-person evaluation, the transit agency will send you a letter regarding your eligibility status. If you do not receive this letter within 21 days, you will be given temporary eligibility allowing you to use paratransit until the agency makes a final determination.
- If your eligibility application for ADA paratransit service is approved, you will receive a brochure with more information about paratransit, including information about reserving a ride.

Call 511 to connect with your transit agency. For information about paratransit, either use the keypad or say “paratransit” at the main menu voice prompt. At the next voice prompt, say the name of the city where you live for information about the paratransit provider that operates in your area.

